Montana State Library

MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

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FL-152



OCTOBER 15, 1955

More wage earners than during any Montana last month. Estimates place the level at 163,000, which exceeds by 2,600 the previous high of 160,400 registered in September, 1952. At the same time the figure is only 1,000 below the all-month record set in August of this year.

Labor Skies Relatively Clear

Labor skies were relatively clear through the month, only a few minor tie-ups because of wage disputes prevailing. In contrast with a year ago the metal mining and processing indusutries recorded tranquility and an advancing employment economy. All labor markets in the state report retention of full crews in primary activities, with a moderate demand distributed among the hiring industries. Departure of college and school workers for the classroom, after a summer of work, was accomplished without disrupting flow of production and with no acute shortages of manpower.

Three Major Industries Increase

Three major industries show increased employment in September over the record month of August: manufacturing with 500, mining with 200, and the finance group with 100. Transportation and contract construction maintained an even count with the pre-ceding month. Seasonal declines were reg-istered in trade, 800, industrial services 500, and government 500.

Trade and Service Crews Dwindle

Variations within these major groups included gain of 300 in processing of primary metals, 300 in food processing, 100 in coal mining, 100 in petroleum processing: while decline of 900 is shown in retail trade, 500 in hotels, camps, and rooming houses, and 700 in federal government employment, principally in forest and parks.

Marked Gains from Year Ago

Comparison with employment figures of September, 1954, discloses the employment effect of a work stoppage in metals prevailing at that time. Metal mining employed 4,900 more wage earners this September than last, while metal processing had a gain of 3,700. Other industries were affected in a secondary manner, transportation and trade each showing 400 more employees this year than last, while finance group increased by 600 and government by 500. Only contract construction with a minus 200 and service industries a minus 500 show less employment this September than last. Net gain from a year ago is 10,800.

Seasonal Employment Peak Passed The small net decline of 1,000 from the

preceding month follows the seasonal pattern and reflects chieffy the termination of summer tourist traffic. Prospects for October and November are for continuation of relatively high levels of employment.

High Employment Levels WORK-APPLICANTS INCREASE IN SEPTEMBER Maintained in September IN FACE OF CONTINUING INDUSTRIAL HIRES

Labor demand in Montana industries maintained through September the midsummer pressure on a market which was near exhaustion in building skills, machinery operation, engineers, and other professional classifications. Early completion of harvest in most areas of the state averted what might otherwise have been a serious shortage of other types of The month ended with nearly 2,800 applicants for work in active files of the state employment services offices.

Reserve 1,000 Below that of Year Ago

This reserve labor supply is about 1,000 below that of a year ago, when work stoppage in the metals industries disrupted the employment economy in August and continued to affect the balance for several months after its settlement in October. The 2,800 this September, however, exceeds the supply in Septembr of 1953, 1952, and 1951 by from 500 to 1,400, and is about even with the count in 1950.

Work Applicant Count in Review

	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950
February	12,304	12,455	10,995	10,136	12,336	18,556
April	9,227	8,945	6,043	5,705	7,048	11,435
June	5,274	5,403	3,910	2,957	4,240	5,809
August	2,458	3,519	2,069	1,619	2,370	2,898
September	2,781	3,782	2,288	1,388	2,304	2,578
October	3,200*	4,038	2,688	1,955	2,572	3,179
December		8,613	7,932	7,517	6,694	8,329

*Estimated.

Replacement for Student Workers

Return of several thousand college and high school students to classrooms in September, after a summer of employment, con-tributed to the labor demand. Many of the workers released by completion of farm harvests were fitted into industrial openings on a normal seasonal pattern, but somewhat earlier in the season than usual. Opening of the sugar refining campaign at four plants in Montana accentuated the labor demand in their localities during late September and early October.

Outlook Good for Sixty Days

Contingent upon continuation of favorable weather, the outlook for October and November is for maintenance of high employment level. Building skills, engineers, and experienced clerical workers are expected to remain in short supply until the seasonal layoffs begin. Carpenters, electricians, bricklayers, equipment operators, and stenographers are being sought in many of the state's principal employment areas.

Hard-Rock Miners in Demand

Demand for underground miners in the Butte area continues, despite recent adoption of the six-day week in that work. Smelter employment presents a different picture, as the shift there to six days resulted in a force reduction and created a reserve force at both Anaconda and Great Falls. reserve supplies replacements and will meet a potential need when mine employment and production reach projected levels.

Construction Employment Level

Employment on the state highway system was slightly over 1,800, a shrinkage of 300 from the preceding month. Seasonal curtailment of oiling operations, and completion of many projects, contributed to the decrease. This is an employment increase of more than 100 from a year ago. Contractor crews numbered 992, and maintenance forces 851. A year ago there were 948 and 754 on these payrolls. A month ago the numbers were 1,267 and 863.

Complete 131 Miles in September

Work was in progress at the end of September on 280 miles of highway and nearly \$1,000,000 in bridge, overpass, gravel piling and highway facilities. Completed during the month were 17 road projects embracing 131 miles of highway and one small bridge item. Contracts awarded but not in work status covered 127 miles of road and \$900,-000 in bridges.

Claim Volume at Low Level

Volume of claims for benefits under the unemployment compensation program was at its lowest level of the year in September, averaging less than 950 claimants a week. Last year the average was 2,750 a week, during prevalance of a work stoppage which extended to employment not directly concerned in the labor dispute. In 1949, when an economic readjustment affected employment adversely, the average was 2,550; in 1950 the figure was 1,350, and the years of 1951, 1952, and 1953 had lower averages than this year with 900, 500, and 800, respectively.

September Placements About Normal

Placement activities at offices of the employment service in September were about normal for the season, 3,824 in industrial lines including teachers, and 4,035 in agrienlture; both figures are below the record placement month of August. Principal hiring demand came from construction and trade establishments, followed by service industries, mining, manufacturing, railroads, and

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Along the Hiring Line—Field Summary Oct. 1

ANACONDA, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg—(48 jobseekers; 18 men, 30 women; 7 men and 11 women over 45) Labor demand low through September, departure of college students had less labor market effect than anticipated. Smelter reserve pool of 300 created when switch to six-day week was made at midsummer provides ample supply for replacements there. Potato harvest will require 300 pickers, three weeks, recruited from domestic and other workers not ordinarily in labor market.

BILLINGS, Columbus, Hardin, Hysham, Laurel, Red Lodge, Roundup—(451 jobscekers; 268 men, 183 women; 101 men and 58 women over 45) Contract construction firms hired briskly through September; retail and wholesale trade called principally for replacements. Coal mining employment stimulated by approach of fall season but volume much below that of previous years. Greater supply and more demand in field of professional and technically trained workers. Labor supply ample to maintain present near-full employment until seasonal decline is signalled by adverse weather.

BOZEMAN, Ennis, Three Forks, Trident—(123 jobseekers; 70 men, 53 women: 13 men and 4 women over 45) College students and wives registering for clerical and part time work. Potato picking season in October will require recruitment from domestic and casual sources. Construction program fully staffed and operating at season peak, subject to curtailment as weather pattern turns to fall and winter. Two dormitory contracts nearly completed, addition to college building started in September. Highway projects using about all available men in that field.

BUTTE, Virginia City, Whitehall—(294 jobseekers; 174 men, 120 women; 79 men and 34 women over 45) Mine crews continue short of required strength, recruitment in distant markets producing only fair flow of qualified miners. Workers who left the mines for outdoor work in spring have only begun to trickle back for winter employment. Transition to six-day week in mines is stimulating trade and service hiring activity. Three larger construction jobs fully staffed, some delay caused by teamster labor dispute.

CUT BANK—(17 jobseckers; 7 men, 10 women; 5 men and 1 woman over 45) Carpenter and bricklayer shortage slows other construction hiring; forty new homes under way. Oil field workers all employed, and seismograph crews operating through area. Harvest completed.

DILLON—(46 jobseekers; 23 men, 23 women; 10 men and 10 women over 45) Full crews at work on power lines in southern part of county. Railroad spur building

LABOR MARKET REFLECTORS

Employment—	1955 Sept.	1955 Aug.	1954 Sept.	Sept. Avg. 1950-1954
Industrial Employment	163,000	164,000	152,300	156,800
New Job Applicants	2,539	2,796	2,917	2,499
Job Applicants, End of Month	2,781	2,458	3,782	2,468
Insured Unemployment—	Oct. 7 1955	Sept. 9 1955	Oct. 8 1954	Avg. 1st Oct. Wk.
New and Renewal Claims	291	160	539	255
Unemployed Weeks Filed	854	728	2,480	1,015
Total Unemployment Claims	1,145	888	3,019	1,270

to new phosphate deposit in same area. Sewer lines being installed in Dillon. Two diamond drill crews of three men exploring for uraniuum at Armstead.

GLASGOW, Fort Peck, Malta, Ophein—(105 jobseekers; 53 men, 52 women; 16 men and 11 women over 45) Hiring for airbase construction has levelled off, after adding nearly 100 in September. Thirty homes building in Glasgow, also service station, apartment house, hotel addition, two office buildings, and a state fish building. Outlying jobs include a new bridge, expansion of radar facilities, and commercial buildings. Harvest completed early, farm hiring dwindling.

GLENDIVE, Circle, Wibaux — (46 jobseekers; 28 men, 18 women; 5 men, 2 women over 45) Construction work is at seasonal peak, producing a shortage of skilled builders. Program includes homes, road jobs, oil pipelines and feeders, and commercial structures. Farm hands scarce, transients few. Some recruitment has been necessary from adjacent areas. Circle area reports shortage of farm hands and construction men.

GREAT FALLS, Choteau, Fort Benton, Stanford—(280 jobseekers; 141 men, 139 women; 38 men and 23 women over 45) Hiring was brisk in nearly all lines in September, smelter work being an exception. Change to a six-hour week in that industry has set up a reserve by reduction of force. Heavy construction program in the city and work on runways, barracks, and facilities at airbase is resulting in shortage of skills. Bricklayers in demand; electricians have been obtained from other areas. Outlook for October is continued full employment unless interrupted by adverse weather.

HAMILTON, Stevensville—(40 jobseekers; 24 men, 16 women; 6 men and 5 women over 45) Decline in food processing and agricultural employment, both seasonal, has increased available labor supply. Logging and lumbering has also trimmed its peakseason crews. Construction is fully staffed, with but few new hires. Local labor is being used on beet harvest machinery and equipment, many also taking jobs at sugar refinery in Missoula. Road job to start soon. Potato harvest will call for 150 to 200

pickers; apple crop extremely light, very little hiring for that harvest.

HAVRE, Chinook, Harlem—(22 jobscekers; 9 men, 13 women; 5 men and 6 women over 45) Railroad and trade hiring demand dwindled in September—seasonal. Building of flood-control dike to begin in October, most of the crew coming with the contractor. Harvest completed at earlier period than normal, releasing crews normally occupied at this season.

HELENA, Boulder, Garrison, Townsend, White Sulphur Springs—(185 jobseekers; 92 men, 93 women; 9 men and 25 women over 45) Labor market more active here in September than in August. Some construction skills were obtained from other areas. Smelter opened another furnace and added 15 to its employment total. Brickyard has been an active hiring factory, accentuated by scarcity of transients. Shortages near in wholesale and retail trade, service, and for domestic work.

KALISPELL, Columbia Falls, Eurcka, Libby, Whitefish—(346 jobseekers; 242 men, 104 women; 69 men and 11 women over 45) Logging and lumbering is at peak seasonal employment, hiring for replacement only and likely to remain at this level until November or early December. Aluminum plant employs 450 on production, will add 50 in October and another 50 during the winter. Construction nearly completed at the plant. Potato harvest is principal October farm labor demand.

LEWISTOWN, Harlowton, Ryegate, Winnett—(32 jobseekers, 18 men, 14 women; 10 men and 7 women over 45) Full employment through September. Industrial hiring continues active, farm hiring has waned with completion of harvest. Twenty-five new homes, a store building, and a veterinary hospital to be started in October. Missouri bridge and road contracts held up pending final decision on location. Six seismograph crews active in area, another exploratory engineering crew of 20 being formed for six week project.

LIVINGSTON, Big Timber—(106 johseekers; 68 men, 38 women; 18 men and 5 women over 45) Construction employment (Continued on Page Three)

EIGHT YEARS OF MONTANA INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT TOTALS, BY MONTHS (in Thousands)

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Aver.
1948	134.4 137.1 133.2 141.9 140.5 145.8 146.6 143.6	132.0 135.5 132.2 139.4 140.7 144.5 145.4 143.2	133.2 137.7 135.2 140.3 143.0 146.3 147.1 144.2	137.1 144.0 142.1 145.9 149.7 149.7 150.7 148.3	140.6 147.3 147.3 149.4 154.8 153.1 155.1 154.1	145.8 151.0 153.6 154.1 159.9 158.0 160.3 160.6	148.9 150.0 154.9 153.5 159.5 158.5 161.3 162.4	150.3 150.1 157.1 154.6 161.2 160.6 161.4 164.0	151.4 149.8 156.8 154.3 160.4 160.3 152.3 163.0	149.6 148.2 152.2 152.4 157.9 159.6 150.2	149.4 146.1 150.7 151.7 156.0 157.6 152.3	147.7 143.3 148.8 150.6 154.9 156.4 150.6	143.4 145.0 147.0 149.0 153.2 154.2 152.8

Along the Hiring Line—Field Summary Oct. 1

(Continued from Page Two)

holding fairly steady. One road job to finish this fall; several in Yellowstone Park will continue until weather intervenes; bus depot nearly finished. Railroad shops running with minimum crew, two track gangs at work. Sawnills operating at peak load and woods crews building up log supply for winter season.

MILES CITY, Baker, Broadus, Ekalaka, Colstrip, Forsyth, Terry—(54 jobseekers; 41 men, 13 women; 11 men and 5 women over 45) Less construction in area than normal, a small school house and some residences under way. One road job in Broadus area completed in September, another to finish soon. Pipelines for oil industry all done. Labor demand fair through September.

MISSOULA, Drummond, Arlee, Superior—(302 jobseekers; 184 men, 118 women; 61 men and 36 women over 45) Labor demand relatively light, though logging and the construction program is full. Work is starting on a natural gas pipeline into Missoula. Two buildings are to be dismantled to make way for new structures; and and addition is starting on a publishing plant building. Sugar refinery started in early October, using about 350 workers on a three-shift basis. Transients are scarce.

POLSON—(98 jobseekers; 53 men, 35 women; 16 men and 8 women over 45) Plywood plant is expanding by addition of a sawmill, which will add to local employment level. A new water line, rural, is under way in lower valley, most of the employment coming from prospective users of the system. One road job is finishing, another starting, and labor shortage anticipated.

SHELBY, Chester, Conrad, Tiber Dam—(27 jobseekers; 11 men, 16 women; 6 men and 2 women over 45) Full employment prevails, with shortages of carpenters and construction labor. Several new road jobs to start, a dozen homes under way and others to be started soon. A tunnel will be excavated at the Tiber Dam this winter, furnishing a measure of wintertime jobs. Rumor of a packing plant to be built at Shelby, not confirmed.

SIDNEY—(22 jobseekers; 8 men, 14 women; 2 men and 4 women over 45) A bridge at Fairview and road job to Lambert used available labor in September, will continue until severe weather. Sugar refinery started October 5, with a full crew, for a three-months run. Beet harvest in progress, no labor shortage reported.

THOMPSON FALLS, Hot Springs—(108 jobseekers; 96 men. 12 women; 41 men and 4 women over 45) Work begun on clearing for Noxon Dam, and core-driling crews are active. Brisk hiring, about 125 on the job besides 50 on survey crews. Lumber industry running at top employment level, hiring only for replacement. Some sign of shortage of skilled woodsmen, clerical, waitress, and cook help.

WOLF POINT, Plentywood, Scobey—(29 jobseekers; 17 men, 12 women; 2 men and 2 women over 45) Labor supply low during September, absorbed by construction and agricultural demands. Just starting are a forty-mile power line, store building, grain storage bins, service station, and a number of new residences. Fewer transients noted.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA (1)

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

	EN	PLOYME	Net Change			
INDUSTRY	Sept. 1955 (2)	Aug. 1955 (3)	Sept. 1954	to	Sept. '54 to Sept. '55	
NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES	163,000	164,000	152,200	-1,000	10,800	
Manufacturing	21,500	21,000	17,000	500	4,500	
Durable goods	13,300	13,000	9,400	300	3,900	
Lumber and timber products	7,000 5,000 1,300	4,700	6,900 1,300 1,200	300 0	3,700 100	
Nondurable goods	8,200	8,000	7,600	200	600	
Food and kindred products	4,200 1,700 1,300 1,000	1,700	4,100 1,700 1,300 500	300 0 - 100 0	100 0 0 500	
Mining Metal mining Coal, quarrying and nonmetallic Petroleum-natural gas production	11,100 7,600 800 2,700	7,600 700	6,000 2,700 900 2,400	100	- 100	
Contract Construction Contractors, building construction Contractors, other than building Contractors, special trade	12,400 4,800 4,200 3,400	4,600 4,300	12,600 5,000 4,400 3,200	200 — 100	-200 -200	
Transportation and utilities Interstate railroads Transportation except railroads Utilities including communication	22,800 13,500 3,500 5,800	13,500 3,500	22,400 13,300 3,600 5,500	0	- 100	
Trade Wholesale trade Retail trade General merchandise and apparel Food stores Eating and drinking establishments Automotive and filling stations Retail trade not elsewhere classified	40,600 9,100 31,500 5,600 4,500 8,300 6,600 6,500	9,000 32,400 5,700 4,600 8,600 6,700	31,300 6,000 4,600 8,200 5,900	- 100 - 900 - 100 - 100 - 300 - 100	200 200 - 400 - 100 100 700	
Finance, insurance and real estate	5,700	5,600	5,100	100	600	
Services and miscellaneous		3,800 2,300	3,600 2,300	- 500 0	— 300	
Government Federal State and local	28,700 6,600 22,100	7,300	6,600		0	
Great Falls Area (Cascade County) Manufacturing Contract construction Transportation and utilities Trade, wholesale and retail Services and miscellaneous (7) Government	19,200 3,000 1,800 2,600 5,900 3,500 2,400	3,000 1,900 2,600 5,900 3,500	1,600 1,700 2,600 5,800 3,400	$\begin{bmatrix} -100 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$	1,400 100 100 100 100	

- (1) Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.
- (2) Preliminary estimates based on return from sample of 686 selected Montana establishments.
- (3) Figures previously released have been revised on returns from 1,012 such establishments.
- (4) Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.
- (5) Includes apparel, chemicals, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.
- (6) Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and profassional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.
- (7) Same as (6) above, also includes finance, insurance, real estate and mining.

COMPARISON OF BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS IN SEPTEMBER, 1955, AND SEPTEMBER, 1954

Employment	Nev	New Job Applicants			Jobseekers in File			Job Placements							U. I. C			
Service	Sept.	1955	Sept.	1954	Sept.	1955	Sept.	1954	_	ptemb	er 195	5		epteml	ber 19	54	Wk.	10-7
Office	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Ind.	Ag.	Tot.	Vet.	Ind.	Ag.	Tot.	Vet.	1955	1954
Anaconda Billings Bozeman Butte	47 434 121 199 25 55 117 63 382 19 89 140 203 51 56 85 212 42 60 31 57	0, 23 53 21 125 1 28 34 39 18 17 34 62	213 338 131 106 46 73 128 91 498 32 95 237 257 82 74 86 207 26 76	11 36 84 71 14 21 22 58 5 24 10	48 451 123 294 17 46 105 46 280 40 222 185 346 32 106 544 302 98 27 22 122	10 33 17 93 22 2 5	305 442 89 727 29 65 62 18 669 48 68 185 286 42 94 57 39 	172 128 20 94 7 17 14 3 202 17 27 53 51 9 29 15 120 30 14	562 246 340 62 210 103 578 42 255 200 220 59 90 92 223 54 126 87 100	198 5 243 86 290 61 411 127 326 78 8 87 44 10 349 43	51 1,489 444 345 305 138 500 164 989 169 581 278 228 146 134 475 130 100 137	46 79 134 23 126 50 48	709 245 14 18 45 174 161 264 83 205 162 225 68 68 234 361 19 146 86 ——————————————————————————————————	7 1,003 262 27 360 101 515 71 335 97 389 95 22 109 84 54 97 4 151 103 	12 1,712 507 41 378 146 689 232 599 180 594 257 247 177 152 288 458 23 297 189	189 211 173 82 97 88 229 53 268 116 105 76 77, 77, 124 220 6 106 53	12 179 7 9 27 149 12 6 76 170 10 52 26 89 51	562 247 25 1,053 28 16 18 16 409 19 14 755 83 27 49 40 196 80 27
TOTALS	2,539		2,917	858	2,781	724	3,782	1,050	3,766	3,571	7,337	2,551		4,035	7,390	2,600	1,145	3,019

^{*} Includes 16 claims of Federal Employees UC program instituted January 1, 1955. ** Office re-opened June 1.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics) (Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel)

	Average	Weekly E	arnings	Averag	e Weekly	Hours	Average Hourly Earnings			
INDUSTRY	Sept. (1) 1955	Aug. (2) 1955	Sept. 1954	Sept. (1) 1955	Aug. (2) 1955	Sept. 1954	Sept. (1) 1955	Aug. (2) 1955	Sept. 1954	
All Manufacturing	\$85.62	\$86.62	\$80.73	40.9	41.1	39.8	\$2.09	\$2.11	\$2.03	
Durable goodsPrimary metals	88.39 80.8 7	88.89 80.36	84.06 69.15	41.8 39.2	42.0 39.1	40.7 35.4	2.11 2.06	2.12 2.06	2.07 1.96	
Nondurable goodsFood and kindred products	80.62 69.38	82.44 71.36	76.18 65.16	39.3 40.6	39.4 40.9	38.6 39.8	2.05 1.71	2.09 1.74	1.97 1.64	
All Mining	96.85	96.23	84.02	40.5	40.6	38.3	2.39	2.37	2.20	
Metal mining	98.52	98.52	67.51	41.2	41.2	33.5	2.39	2.39	2.02	
Transportation and Utilities (except railrds.)	82.42	82.35	80.27	_	_	_	-	_		
Transportation (except railroads)	102.66 72.87	102.66 72.81	97.52 72.22	39.4	39.4	41.1	1.85	1.85	1.76	

⁽¹⁾ Preliminary estimates. (2) Figures previously released have been revised on more complete returns.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION COMMISSION OF MONTANA

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